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ABSTRACT

Recent recommendations related to the future of community colleges have advocated a strong role in providing civic literacy education for adults, specifically arguing that the colleges should provide civic education programs that focus on government, public policy, and contemporary issues. To this end, Gulf Coast Community College, in Florida, has developed the Citizen Leadership Training Program (CLTP). The CLTP is built upon the philosophical premise that citizen leaders exist in all communities and that by engaging citizens in a comprehensive curriculum, a community college can assist individuals in recognizing and accepting responsibility for active participation at community, state, and national levels. CLTP's content areas focus on the following roles of the citizen leader: as a cornerstone of democracy, as a communicator, as a collaborator, and as a catalyst for change. The program assists students through six developmental stages, including awareness of one's role as a leader, transformation of the individual into a leader, committing to a citizen leadership philosophy, taking action, renewing one's leadership role and skills, and facilitating the development of others. The program provides 30 hours of citizen leadership training and can be adapted to many different institutional settings. (MAB)

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BUILDING CITIZEN LEADERS

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BUILDING CITIZEN LEADERS

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BUILDING CITIZEN LEADERS

RATIONALE

Communities across the country are in jeopardy--with growing crime rates, environmental pollution, homelessness, challenges of global competition, poverty, and illiteracy. All one need do is read the front page of any newspaper or Why Americans Hate Politics to agree the greatest challenge this country faces is the renewal of its communities, particularly with regard to the ability to engage in conflict resolution and effective problem solving.

The entire national experience--its challenges and opportunities related to growth management, environmental protection, competition in a global economy, upgrading of the workforce, multicultural exigencies, increased urbanization, adaptation to an information society which emphasizes critical thinking, and effectiveness in meeting human needs--is lived out in miniature in communities across America. From the solutions to community problems of the 21st century may emerge responses appropriate to critical national imperatives.

Citizen leaders will be required to shape positively a new environment, the post-industrial society; or else the current volatile mix of demographic, economic, and technical forces will continue to drive the country toward a human capital deficit, threaten the competitiveness of economic institutions, and act as a barrier to the individual opportunity of all.

E. J. Boone stated in The Community-Based Programming Handbook, "The need in America to renew and rebuild the concept of community, in which people are empowered and provided the opportunity to develop their innate leadership abilities within their own surroundings, is among the most important items on the nation's agenda as it prepares for the twenty-first century." President Clinton accentuated this need in his 1994 State of the Union address. Renewal of communities depends on a qualitative, contextual view by which citizen values are passed along. Such renewal thrives on grassroots activism and leadership typified by America's founding fathers but evidenced long before drafting of the Declaration of Independence. Dr. Betty J. Overton of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation wrote, "The beginning of any problem solving is people--individuals who step forward to facilitate bold new ways of seeing problems. The work of creating community vision and new communities demands heroic efforts. It calls for individuals, leaders and followers, who make the commitment to revisioning the world around them and who translate that vision so others might see." Productive changes in communities will occur when citizen leadership dispositions and skills are developed and when, in addition to enhancing individual actions, citizen leaders use them to define public problems, engage in public discourse, anticipate consequences of options, resolve conflict, practice making informed choices, reach consensus, and take action on behalf of the common good.

The Future of Community Colleges Commission's recent recommendations urge community colleges to "lead the way in civic literacy for adults." Specifically, it recommends "that colleges consider introducing a new civic education program for adults, one that would focus on government, public policy, and contemporary issues.

The approach would be interdisciplinary, with the aim of encouraging responsible citizen participation." Therefore, to reestablish a sense of community and create a nurturing environment, there is a need for community colleges to serve as community catalysts to galvanize people, community agencies, and organizations into collaborative action on behalf of the common good.

The appropriate community college response to community building imperatives is an instructional one. To this end, Gulf Coast Community Colleges proposes institutionalization of the Citizen Leadership Training Program-a comprehensive program specializing in the cultivation of citizen leaders.

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND COMMITMENT

Each community college's commitment to community building through citizen leadership training should be derived from its statement of institutional mission. Not only will this support the college's community building role, it will permit alignment of objectives, strategies, and resources necessary to support the role. First and foremost, the community college president and senior administrators are responsible for creating an environment conducive to the program, and each must make a concerted effort to involve and strengthen the sense of ownership of the staff, the faculty, and governing board in community building efforts.

A successful CLI citizen leadership training program is heavily dependent upon the support of the administration and the desire of the college to fulfill responsibilities inherent in a comprehensive community college mission. A commitment to be of the community and to be a catalyst in preparing citizens to be productive members of that community is essential for success.

A strategy should be employed to heighten community awareness of the need for continual development, to encourage citizens to become involved, and to seek the community college for leadership. Community involvement and ownership is key.

THE CITIZEN LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

The Citizen Leadership Training Program is built upon the philosophical premise that citizen leaders exist in all communities and that by engaging citizens in a comprehensive curriculum, a community college can assist individuals in recognizing and accepting responsibility for active participation in problem-solving at community, state, and national levels.

In developing the Citizen Leadership Training Program, the Citizen Leadership Institute worked within the premise that citizen leaders are cornerstones, catalysts, communicators, and collaborators and that citizens progress through six stages-awareness, transformation, commitment, action, renewal, and facilitating the development of others-in leadership skills building.

PROGRAM CONTENT AREAS

The Citizen Leader as a Cornerstone:

- Philosophical Foundation (including definition of politics)
- Self Esteem
- Leadership Styles and Settings
- Values
- Barriers in Diversity (including multi-culturalism, vales clarification, role and nature of traditions, bias and prejudice, open and closed societies)
- "Community" (including signs of a healthy community, environmental scanning, assessing and prioritizing community will, issues vs problems, problem framing)
- Understanding Your Attitudes and Behavior
- Strategies for Embracing Diversity
- Networking and Assessing in Diversity
- Power

The Citizen Leader as a Communicator:

- Introspection and Self Talk
- Patterns and Purposes of Communication (including deliberation vs debate, persuasion, bargaining, and negotiation)
- Listening/Questioning Skills
- Group Discussion (including caucus)
- Moderating Skills
- Persuasion, Negotiation, and Advocacy

The Citizen Leader as a Collaborator:

- Conflict Resolution (including controversy and mediation)
- Managing Emotional Disruptions and Distractions
- Critical Thinking and Creative Problem Solving
- Rational Decision Making
- Facilitating Collaboration

The Citizen Leader as a Catalyst:

- Power
- The Citizen Leader as a Change Agent
- Vision, Goal Setting, and Action Planning
- Motivation and Empowerment
- Problem Framing
- Organizing a Community Forum
- Team Building and Community Coalitions
- Leadership for Working in a Cross-Cultural Society
- Resource Mobilization: Building and Sustaining Community Efforts
- Managing Change and Uncertainty
- Transition: Moving Forward

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

The CLI Training Program assists the individual to progress through developmental stages of:

Stage One--Awareness

Stage one establishes the foundation for the development of the citizen leader. The individual recognizes that development is life long and that each person must first develop himself/herself in order to have greater influence with others.

Stage Two--Transformation

Stage two involves the individual in the acquisition of knowledge and skills required to create solutions to community problems. Three changes in the individual are brought about in this stage: (1) a change in disposition, (2)a change in skills and knowledge, and (3) a change in function.

Stage Three--Commitment

Stage three is marked by a conscious commitment to citizen leadership philosophy, principles, and practices.

Stage Four--Action

Stage four is the point at which the individual learns practical applications of the first three stages.

Stage Five--Renewal

Stage five is reflected by the citizen leader's ongoing training in citizen leadership. It is also a period during which the individual seeks opportunities to reinforce learning acquired during the first four stages.

Stage Six--Facilitating the Development of Others

The final stage prepares the citizen leader to function as a facilitator of the development of other citizen leaders.

PROGRAM DELIVERY

The "core" of the Citizen Leadership Training Program is thirty hours. The most desirable path for individuals to follow to citizen leadership is one which sequentially moves them through the content of the various developmental stages. To facilitate this process, the "core" has been organized as two fifteen-hour segments. Ideally, citizens take part I before taking part II. Realistically, however, citizen need may dictate enrollment in part II before taking part I. This should be permitted. Facilitator/trainer training emphasizes the importance of encouraging citizens to complete both parts and then to enhance development by enrolling in courses from renewal stage offerings. The program is designed so that credit and non-credit courses may be offered from the "core" and renewal curriculum. The "core" may be offered as four, seven, or ten non-credit courses so that participants still progress through the developmental stages of citizen leadership. The Adaptation Guide details options for delivery of the training program to the general public and target groups.

Class offering may be made on campus in a classroom setting or in the community-civic building, church, organization meeting rooms, etc. The setting will be derived from the demand for courses.

Regardless of the delivery system utilized, to receive a Citizen Leader certificate of completion participants must enroll and complete the two fifteen (15) hour core content area studies.

PROGRAM TRAINING MATERIALS

A complete set of training materials is provided as part of the Citizen Leadership Institute's "train the trainer" and "program development" program. Additional copies are available from GCCC and must be ordered in a timely manner. Materials for establishing and providing the Citizen Leadership Training Program include trainer and facilitator guides for all training modules, associated pre-work assignments, cases, examples, masters of handouts, How-to-Guide, Adaptation Guide, and Promotion Guide. Trainer and facilitator guides are designed so that modules might be taught by the experienced or novice. The Adaptation Guide offers recommendations for adjusting training methods, examples and activities, room settings, and time frames to target groups. The How-to-Guide provides information for establishing and implementing the program.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Citizen Leadership Training Program has been designed so that its implementation and management does not demand additional staff. Rather, it represents a curriculum which may be offered as new courses or infused within existing courses as part of the unit's schedule of credit and/or non-credit activities. A unit with a single full-time employee responsible for all programming is as capable of institutionalizing the Citizen Leadership Training Program as is a unit with extensive staff each of whom may specialize in programming for particular target markets. The Adaptation Guide prescribes options for institutionalizing the curriculum to meet the needs of the general public and, in particular, of youth, women and minorities, business and industry, civic and service agencies, and educators.